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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA NOTES (OCTOBER 6 - 19, 2007)

¶1. (U) Summary: The following Northern Uganda Notes provides information on the situation on the ground and USG activities aimed at meeting Mission objectives in northern Uganda. These objectives include promoting regional stability through peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. Post appreciates feedback from consumers on the utility of this product and any gaps in information that need to be filled. End Summary.

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES  
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¶2. (SBU) On October 18 and 19, press reports, Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) officials and Ugandan Government officials began confirming news reports that Opio Makasi, an 18-year veteran of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and its chief operations officer left the LRA camp in Garamba National park, in DRC seeking a United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) unit to which to surrender. On October 9, Makasi had surrendered himself to a Congolese police unit, which reportedly took him into custody. He was taken to Kinshasa and was being held by military intelligence, according to press reports. The Government of Uganda requested Makasi be turned over to Ugandan officials.

¶3. (SBU) U.N. Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Joachim Chissano traveled in the region from October 19-23. Charge attended a donor meeting with Chissano, who planned to visit Juba and Rikwangba during the visit. Chissano reported on his earlier meetings with Central African Republic President Bozize and Democratic Republic of Congo President Kabila. Chissano thought the launch of the Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan (PRDP) would help discussions for the implementing protocol for Agenda Item Two: Comprehensive Solutions. Chissano met with President Museveni and Ugandan Government officials before departing for Juba.

¶4. (U) International Criminal Court (ICC) Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo called for the criminal prosecution of LRA leader Joseph Kony and his three top leaders during a briefing on October 18. He insisted that all four LRA indictees charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity be tried in the ICC in The Hague. Ocampo noted that the LRA was contributing greatly to instability in the region and had yet to release sex slaves and children.

¶5. (U) On October 14, Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda emphasized the success of the consultations on Agenda Item Three: Accountability and Reconciliation of the peace talks. He stated that the government had consulted with stakeholders in several parts of the country including Gulu, Lira, Teso, Adjumani, Arua, Mbale,

Masaka, Mbarara, and Masindi. In addition, the GOU consulted with judiciary officials, academia, and civil society. The consultations cost USD 400,000 and were funded by The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States. According to Rugunda, people across the country were yearning for peace, accountability, and reconciliation. Rugunda acknowledged that the LRA had expressed a desire to handle funds contributed by development partners for their part of the consultations. However, he confirmed that funds will be handled only by the mediator on behalf of the Government of Southern Sudan. Rugunda expressed support for an acceleration of the peace talks.

¶6. (U) The LRA demanded the immediate release of USD 600,000 for public consultations and mobilization in Uganda. The LRA accused the donors of inaction, which in the LRA opinion could cause the unraveling of the peace talks. Godfrey Ayoo, spokesperson for the LRA refuted allegations that the funds would be used for the purchase of weapons and food. The LRA's Juba delegation met with Government of Southern Sudan mediator Riek Machar to discuss its plan to visit 20 locations in Uganda as part of its consultation process.

¶7. (U) During the October 7 inauguration of the (UPDF) Armored Brigade Field Engineering Regiment, Chief of Defense Forces Aronda Nyakairima announced that the army would actively pursue LRA rebels if a peace agreement was not reached. Nyakairima stated, however, that the UPDF was committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict with the LRA. He cited the integration of former rebels into the army as evidence of the military's commitment to peace.

¶8. (U) The Government of Uganda has been attempting to assuage fears concerning the Sudan People's Liberation Movement's (SPLM) standoff with Khartoum over implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Northern Ugandans were concerned that the peace deal reached between the SPLM and the Khartoum government in 2005

KAMPALA 00001689 002 OF 002

was in trouble and that violence could resume in Southern Sudan.

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY  
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¶9. (U) On October 15, President Museveni and Prime Minister Apollo Nsibambi hosted a function to officially close the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) for the Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan for Northern Uganda, (which had been implemented since May 2006 )and also launch the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan. At least 500 guests attended the ceremony marking the transition from emergency assistance to recovery and development in war-torn northern Uganda. Charge and USAID Peace Support Team Chief attended. The PRDP will bring USD 606 million to northern Uganda over a three year period, with the GoU stating it will meet 30 percent of the cost.

¶10. (U) President Museveni has ordered the immediate dispersment of PRDP monies to individuals who lost limbs as a result of the insurgency in the north. He stated that his advisor on northern issues, Richard Todwong had compiled a list of 1,800 people in Gulu whose limbs were amputated by the LRA. Museveni complained that giving the LRA USD 600,000 for consultations as part of the Juba peace talks while their victims lived pitiable lives was unfair.

¶11. (U) The World Food Programme began airlifting food to more than 248,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Acholi and Lango regions affected by floods. Heavier than normal rains since July continue to affect the region. However, USAID, DFID and ECHO were concerned about inflated numbers of people affected and assistance needed. There were concerns that WFP overstated the urgency of the food needs and opted for expensive air operations in locations before other less expensive options were fully explored.

¶12. (U) U.S. Activities: The U.N. Flash Appeal for flood response requests USD 41.4 million for 300,000 beneficiaries. To date, the Flash Appeal received approximately USD 6 million from the U.N. Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and USD 17million from donors. USAID/OFDA has provided USD 500,000 for seeds and emergency shelter materials in the worst affected areas of Teso sub-region.

¶13. (U) Combined Joint Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) has actively worked to restore people's livelihood in Northern Uganda. Over the past year, the CJTF-HOA Civil Affairs Team repaired 75 boreholes. These boreholes bring fresh drinking water to over 300,000 people in war affected areas of Northern Uganda. The construction of a pediatric ward at the Kitgum District Referral Hospital, a library in Kitgum and funding to drill 48 new boreholes in Lira, Pader, and Kitgum Districts have been approved.

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IN THE MEDIA AND THE WEB  
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¶14. (U) The Government of Uganda has spent USD 1.7 billion combating Kony and rebel forces in the north, according to the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), Oxfam, and Saferworld. The security advocacy group published this estimate in a recently released report entitled "Africa's Missing Billions." The report asserts that the war in the north subsumed almost half of Uganda's military expenditure and has disrupted overall economic productivity. However, the report did note that Uganda has fared better than some of its neighbors, including Burundi and Rwanda, in terms of the costs of internal conflict. The report received wide coverage in the local dailies.

¶15. (U) The October 19 edition of the government-owned "New Vision" newspaper led with the headline "Kony, Otti Fight." The article described an altercation between the LRA leaders over the peace process and the USD 600,000 demanded for carrying out public consultations. The article describes a several day long fire-fight between factions, resulting in Otti and his followers being "put under some kind of house arrest," according to an unnamed source. There was no independent verification of violence between the factions, but the defection of the LRA's operations officer may reveal more about the alleged fighting.  
CHRITTON